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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Four Schools Selected to Represent Vermont at Regional Conference on High School Transformation

The Schools Will Share Successful Strategies with Colleagues from Across New England

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Burlington – Four Vermont high schools—**Harwood Union High School** (South Duxbury), **South Burlington High School** (South Burlington), **Rochester High School** (Rochester), and **Vergennes Union High School** (Vergennes)—have been invited to represent their state at a regional conference on effective strategies for improving teaching and learning in the 21st century.

The conference, **High School Redesign in Action** (newenglandssc.org/conference), will take place April 7–8, 2011, in Nashua, New Hampshire. It is sponsored by the New England Secondary School Consortium in collaboration with the departments of education for Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The New England Secondary School Consortium is a regional educational partnership committed to high school innovation. **All the selected schools have made significant progress raising student achievement, graduation rates, or college-enrollment numbers, among other indicators of educational accomplishment.**

“We are excited to see real movement in school innovation, thanks in part to the work of the New England Secondary School Consortium and our League of Innovative Schools. There is great support for the exemplary practices these schools are employing and for sharing them with all Vermont high schools to ensure our student experience is relevant and valuable,” said **Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner, Department of Education**.

Harwood Union High School has made inclusivity, openness, shared leadership, and the student voice its foundational values. Students and faculty use a collaborative decision-making model—the H-1 Change Process—and several innovations that foster a more democratic school culture: student-run assemblies, the H-term (a two-week block of instructional time devoted to student voice and choice), a school-within-a-school model, local food-service partnerships, the Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together Team, and a performance-based graduation portfolio that ensures our school is fulfilling its mission.

South Burlington High School provides a rigorous, relevant, and flexible high school education to its thirty students. In South Burlington High School’s school-within-a-school, students design their own curriculum and engage in real-world learning experiences every week.

After two years of research, **Rochester High School**, a rural small school located in central Vermont, launched Central Vermont Big Picture Academy last fall with fourteen students in one advisory in grades 9–12.

In 2006, **Vergennes Union High School** received one of the few transformation grants given by the state of Vermont. Over the past five years, the school has taken a systemic approach to school improvement that includes a positive behavioral supports system, teacher leadership opportunities and a school-wide effort to work toward performance-based graduation requirements.

“These remarkable high schools are setting an example for all of New England,” said David Ruff, executive director of the Great Schools Partnership, the New England Secondary School Consortium’s coordinating organization. “The programs they’re creating and pioneering reflect what we know works for today’s students. And their unwavering commitment to their students, teachers, and larger community is nothing short of inspiring.”

The New England Secondary School Consortium’s works to close persistent achievement gaps, promote greater educational equity, and graduate every public high school student prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. The Consortium is funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the largest philanthropy in New England focused exclusively on education, and coordinated by Great Schools Partnership, a nonprofit educational-support organization in Portland, Maine. The Nellie Mae Education Foundation has committed more than \$2 million to support the Consortium, which includes \$1 million in partnership grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

For more information:

newenglandssc.org

Vermont’s High School Redesign in Action Presentations

Title: **MANY VOICES, ONE MISSION: DEMOCRATIZING SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION**

Schools: Harwood Union High School, South Duxbury

Presenters: Helen Beattie (YATST director), Ellen Berrings (employment specialist), Jean Berthiaume (teacher), Kathy Cadwell (teacher), Anna Church (student), Addie Dettor (student), Marcus Grace (teacher), Susan Hennessey (media specialist/librarian), Paul Morris (chef), Yuka Oiwa (student), Duane Pierson (principal), Zak Williams (student)

Website: www.harwoodunion.com

Contact: Duane Pierson | piersond@harwood.org

Title: **EMBRACING THE BIG PICTURE: REAL-WORLD LEARNING FOR EVERY STUDENT**

Schools: Rochester High School, Rochester | South Burlington High School, South Burlington

Presenters: Sarah Bertucci (internship coordinator), Brian Greenfield (advisor), Kerith Lewis (advisor), Jim Shields (advisor), Andy West (curriculum director), students from BPSB and CVBPA

Website: www.bigpicturesb.net

Contact: Andy West | awest@wnwsu.org

Title: **TEARING DOWN WALLS, BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

School: Vergennes Union High School, Vergennes

Presenters: Beth Adreon (teacher), Nancy Ambrose (teacher), Matt DeBlois (teacher), Kristine Kirkaldy (teacher), Sarah Thompson (teacher), Ed Webbley (co-principal)

Website: www.vuhs.org

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